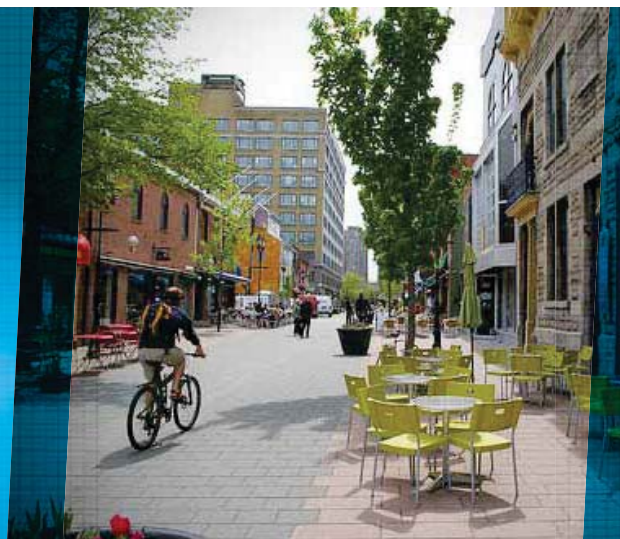


KING COUNTY BOARD OF HEALTH

Planning for Healthy Communities



By working together, urban planning and public health professionals can create a smarter, healthier city environment for everyone. The following document details how strategic initiatives can lead to thriving healthy communities in King County.

History

In adopting “Planning for Healthy Communities Guidelines,” King County Board of Health carries on a tradition that began over a century ago, when urban planners and public health collaborated to prevent infectious disease outbreaks. Public health professionals and policy-makers, including the Board of Health, have again turned their focus to factors that influence the quality and health-friendliness of urban environments. An emerging body of evidence and best practices increasingly links planning decisions associated with land use and transportation to environments that allow people to be physically active, eat nutritious food, and live in safe and healthy places. In essence, there is a growing realization that “place” does matter and that the leading and actual causes of death and disability are linked to the environments where we live, work, learn and play.

The Board of Health developed the Planning for Healthy Communities Guidelines using leading and actual causes of death and other factors known to impact health in King County. “Actual causes of death” are the behaviors and exposures to harmful conditions that underlie the chronic diseases and medical conditions that eventually lead to premature death (also known as the “leading causes of death”). Included among the actual causes are: tobacco use, poor diet and physical inactivity, alcohol consumption, microbial and toxic agents, and injuries due to motor vehicle collisions and violence. The Guidelines also utilize factors known to strongly affect overall health, including physical access to health services and conditions that lead to positive mental health.

Planning processes and decisions can help reverse trends in premature death and disability among King County residents. For example, people could conveniently and routinely increase their physical activity level if they lived in neighborhoods with well-connected, safe, inviting street networks that provided pedestrian and bicycle access to shopping, transit, schools and other daily destinations. Reducing dependency on cars also helps reduce people’s exposure to toxic agents through improving air quality. Planning decisions can also help increase opportunities for family recreation and sports as well as improved mental health through regularly designing or retrofitting parks and trails into communities and neighborhoods.

DID YOU KNOW?

With strategic initiatives, we can reduce the following health risks:

- Tobacco use
- Poor diet
- Lack of physical activity
- Alcohol consumption
- Toxic agents
- Personal injuries

Finally, the Board of Health intends that these Guidelines also support the reintegration of public health into planning decisions as a primary strategy for ensuring that all people and communities have the opportunity to make healthy choices regardless of their income, education or ethnic background.

Planning for Healthy Communities Guidelines as approved by the King County Board of Health, March 17, 2011

The following nine guidelines are intended to inform land use and transportation planners working at regional, county, and city levels of strategies to improve the health of residents and communities throughout King County. The guidelines are based on actual and leading causes of preventable death and illness in King County. The guidelines apply to all

populations of King County; particularly the very young, the very old, those with compromised health, and those living in harmful environments and near environmental hazards. These groups merit special attention because they bear disproportionate rates of disease and disability.

1 Physical Activity

BOARD OF HEALTH GUIDELINE

Residents in all communities in King County have access to safe and convenient opportunities for physical activity and exercise.

Rationale: Planning and design that encourages and enables access to walking, bicycling, transit, and other means of exercise in safe and inviting environments provides residents with ways to obtain needed levels of daily physical activity.

Key Healthy Community Planning Elements

- Housing, schools, jobs, parks, and commercial and public services within walkable proximity of neighborhoods;
- Number, size, and accessibility of parks and open space;
- Presence of sidewalks and walking and bicycle paths;
- Transit safely reached by walking or bicycling;
- Presence of affordable community centers and other recreational facilities.

2 Nutrition

BOARD OF HEALTH GUIDELINE

Residents in all communities in King County have access to healthy and affordable foods.

Rationale: Planning decisions that consider all aspects of a food system can promote residents eating a healthy diet by making affordable nutritious foods readily available and easily accessible.

Key Healthy Community Planning Elements

- A robust local farm to table chain, including community gardens and other food growing opportunities in urban areas;
- Long-term preservation of farm land;
- Number and location of healthy food retail outlets including farmers' markets and grocery stores;
- Safe and reliable transportation options to healthy food retail outlets.

3 Harmful Environmental Exposure

BOARD OF HEALTH GUIDELINE

Residents in all communities in King County are protected from exposure to harmful environmental agents and infectious diseases.

Rationale: Community design, land use designations, and housing standards can reduce exposure to harmful environmental agents in our air, water, food and soil.

Key Healthy Community Planning Elements

- Building and design standards that create safe, healthy, and accessible indoor environments;
- Planning policies and practices to reduce generation of and exposure to air pollutants;
- Water resource management that provides safe water for drinking, recreation, and fisheries;
- Management of standing water to prevent transmission of infectious disease;
- Safe management and disposal of solid and hazardous waste and overall reduction of solid and hazardous waste.

4 Transportation-related Injury

BOARD OF HEALTH GUIDELINE

Residents in all communities in King County use transportation systems designed to prevent pedestrian, bicyclist, and driver injuries.

Rationale: Land use designations, roadways, and availability of and access to safe non-motorized transportation infrastructure can reduce the risk of injuries and fatalities for pedestrians, bicyclists, and drivers.

Key Healthy Community Planning Elements

- Safe roadways designed to prevent motor vehicle collisions;
- Safe pedestrian paths, sidewalks, and street crossings;
- Well designed and safe bicycle paths and lanes.

5

Violence-related Injury

BOARD OF HEALTH GUIDELINE

Residents in all communities in King County live in safe communities free from violence and fear of violence.

Rationale: Land use designations and community design can create environments that reduce violence by fostering a sense of community and security in which residents are safe accessing services, recreation, schools, and jobs.

Key Healthy Community Planning Elements

- Commercial districts and community spaces designed for interaction and community cohesiveness, safety, and convenient access;
- Presence of well lit and maintained parks, streetscapes, and other public spaces;
- Site and building design enables open and unobstructed views of public areas and prevents isolated and hidden spaces.

6

Tobacco Use

BOARD OF HEALTH GUIDELINE

Residents in all communities in King County are protected from involuntary exposure to second hand tobacco smoke and children cannot access tobacco products.

Rationale: Land use designations, ordinances, and zoning affect access to tobacco products and exposure to secondhand smoke.

Key Healthy Community Planning Elements

- Policies limiting tobacco use and exposure to second hand smoke;
- Planning practices limiting tobacco retail outlets near public open spaces and youth-centered facilities, especially schools.

7

Alcohol Use

BOARD OF HEALTH GUIDELINE

Residents in all communities in King County are protected from negative impacts of alcohol.

Rationale: Land use designations, ordinances, and zoning can affect access to alcohol products and alcohol-related violence and injury.

Key Healthy Community Planning Elements

- Planning practices managing the location and impact of bars, taverns, and retail outlets which sell alcohol, especially near public spaces and youth-centered facilities.

8

Mental Health and Well-being

BOARD OF HEALTH GUIDELINE

Residents in all communities in King County benefit from community design that maximizes opportunities for social connectivity and stress reduction.

Rationale: Community design can reduce individual isolation, promote social interaction and community cohesiveness, and alleviate environmental determinants of stress.

Key Healthy Community Planning Elements

- Safe, inviting, and accessible venues and community places that encourage beneficial social interaction and community cohesiveness;
- Parks and green spaces that provide stress relief, rest, and relaxation;
- Noise levels managed and mitigated, especially near residential neighborhoods, schools, and health care facilities.

9

Health Services Access

BOARD OF HEALTH GUIDELINE

Residents in all communities in King County have access to health care services.

Rationale: Community design that considers the location of services and provides a range of travel options can provide residents with readily available and easily accessible health care services within their community.

Key Healthy Community Planning Elements

- Number and accessibility of health clinics providing routine and preventive medical care and urgent and emergency care services;
- Safe and reliable transportation options to health service sites;
- Location of and response time for emergency response units.



For more information contact Public Health - Seattle & King County,
Environmental Health Division, at **206-205-4394** or online at
www.kingcounty.gov/health/healthyplaces

Design of this document made possible by Public Health - Seattle & King County and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

8-11